

A PERSUASIVE TO STEADFASTNESS NO. 1042

A SERMON
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*“For we are made partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end.”
Hebrews 3:14.*

HOW is it possible for the preacher to say too much about faith, or to extol this grace too highly! It is of vital importance, not at one stage of the Christian's history only, but throughout the whole of his career, from his setting out even till he reaches the goal where faith is turned to sight. By faith we begin the life of obedience to Christ, and by faith we continue to lead the life of holiness, for “the just *shall* live by faith.” This is the point of honor and of safety with all the just—the justified ones. The whole compass of their well-being, though it takes in the sternest sense of duty and the highest grant of privilege, is to simply believe, to rely implicitly, and to confide cheerfully, in their covenant God. The beginning of their confidence is a hopeful sign. Time will test its value. The result of that profession has yet to be shown. Therefore it is necessary that the beginning of their confidence should be held fast, steadfast even unto the end. When we begin in the Spirit we do not proceed with a hope to be made perfect in the flesh. We do not start with justification by faith, and then look for perfection by works. We do not lean upon Christ when we are little children, and then expect to run alone when we are men; but we live by drawing all our stores from Him, while as yet we are naked, and poor, and miserable. When most enriched by His grace, we still have to say, and delight to say it, “All my springs are in You.” Faith at the beginning and faith at the close; faith all the way through is the one important matter. A failure in this, as we observed in our reading, shut Israel out of the Promised Land. “They could not enter in because of unbelief.” Unbelief is always the greatest mischief to the saints; hence they have needed to watch earnestly against it. Faith is always the channel of innumerable blessings to them: they ought, therefore, most watchfully to maintain it.

We shall have to show the value of faith while we try to open up the text before us, in which I see, first, *a high privilege*—“We are made partakers *of* Christ”; and secondly, by implication, *a serious question*; the question whether or not we have been made partakers of Christ. And then, in the third place, an *unerring test*—“We are made partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end.”

I. First, then, here is A VERY HIGH PRIVILEGE. “We are made partakers of Christ.”

Observe that the text does not say, “We are made partakers *with* Christ.” That would be true; a very precious truth, too, for we are joint-heirs with Christ, and because all things are His, all things are ours. Christ holds for us the entire heritage of the faithful as our representative, and as we are made partakers with Him in the Father's favor, and in the world's hatred; so we shall be partakers with Him in the glory to be revealed, and in the bliss which endures forever and ever. But here we have to do with our being partakers *of* Christ, rather than our being partakers *with* Christ.

Neither does it say we are made partakers of rich spiritual benefits; that is a fact which we may greet with thorough trust and hearty welcome, but, dear brothers and sisters, there is more than that here! To be partakers of pardoning mercy; to be partakers of renewing grace; to be partakers of the adoption; to be partakers of sanctification, preservation, and of all the other covenant blessings, is to possess an endowment of unspeakable value! But to be made “partakers *of* Christ,” is to have *all* in one! You have all the flowers in one posy, all the gems in one necklace, all the sweet spices in one delicious compound! “We are made partakers of Christ”—of Himself! “It pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell,” and we are made partakers with Him of all that He is ordained to be of God unto us—“wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.” We are partakers of Him; this is a privilege that no

tongue can ever utter, no thought of finite mortal can ever grasp; but ah, it would need more time than we can afford, and far more spiritual teaching than we profess to have attained, to dive into this great and profound utterance, “We are made partakers of Christ.” Still, as we stand spell-bound on the margin, let us venture to sail out just a little upon the surface of this ocean of goodness and of grandeur.

We are made partakers of Christ, beloved, when, first of all, by faith in Him we procure a share in His merits. Sinful and sad, covered with transgressions, and conscious of our shame, we came to the fountain filled with His blood. We washed in it and were made white as snow; in that hour we became partakers of Christ! Christ is the substitute for sin; He suffered the penalty due from the unjust, for which He died, for the violated law of God. When we believe in Him, we become partakers of those sufferings, or rather of the blessed fruit of them; the fact of His having borne what we ought to have borne becomes manifest to us; we present the memorial thereof at the altar of God, the throne of the heavenly grace, in prayers and professions, and in spiritual worship. The blood pleads our cause; the blood of Jesus, which speaks better things than that of Abel, intercedes for mercy, not for vengeance; by its rich virtue, its *real* value, its *vital* merit, it puts our sins forever to death, and lays our fears forever to rest. Oh, how blessed to be a partaker of Christ, the sin-atonement sacrifice; to stand before God as a sinner who deserves nothing but damnation in himself, and yet knows by precious faith that—

*“Covered is my unrighteousness,
From condemnation I am free!”*

—that I am a partaker of the meritorious sacrifice of the great High Priest, who, having once offered one sacrifice forever, now sits down, His work being done, at the right hand of God. What a privilege is this!

Moreover, we are partakers of Christ, inasmuch as His righteousness also becomes ours by imputation. We are not only freed from sin through His atonement, but we are rendered acceptable to God through His obedience as our responsible surety; we are “Accepted in the Beloved”; we are justified through His righteousness; God sees us not marred in the likeness of the first Adam who sinned, but He sees us in Christ, the second Adam, remade, redeemed, restored, arrayed in garments of glory and beauty, with the Savior’s vesture on, as holy as the Holy One! He sees “No sin in Jacob or iniquity in Israel.” When Jacob learns to trust in the Messiah, and Israel hides behind his representative, the Lord our righteousness, Jacob ceases to wrestle, for he prevails, and Israel stands in honor, for he is a prince with God! Blessed, thrice blessed, are they who are partakers of Christ in His righteousness!

After we are thus saved from sin, and righteousness is imputed to us by faith, we further become partakers of Christ by living upon Him, feeding on Him. The sacramental table represents our fellowship; though it does no more than *represent* it, it represents it well; at that table we eat bread, and we drink wine; and the body is thus fed, typifying that through meditation upon the Incarnate Christ our soul is sustained; and by remembering the Passion of the Lord, as the wine cup sets forth His blood, our spirits are comforted and revived, and our hearts are nourished. It is not that the bread is anything or the wine anything, but it is that Christ is *everything* to us! He is our daily bread; His atonement makes glad our heart—makes us “Strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might.” Brothers and sisters, you know what it is to feed upon Jesus, and what satisfying food it is; when nothing else can give your soul rest and peace, remembering the Incarnate God will do it; a study of the suffering Savior will bring the refreshment and consolation you need; Jesus Christ, when He is our food, makes us to be partakers of Himself.

But, is there not a doctrine concealed here of deeper significance? The union of believers with Himself was among the latest of all the revelations which our blessed Lord, when on earth, made known to His disciples; with a parable He showed it, and without a parable He declared it plainly. Every true child of God is one with Christ; this union is set forth in Scripture by several images to which we will just refer, but upon none of which can we just now enlarge. We are one with Christ and partakers of Him as the stone is cemented to the foundation; it is built upon it, rests upon it, and together with the foundation goes to make up the structure. So we are built into Christ by coherence and adhesion—joined to Him and made a spiritual house for the habitation of God by the Holy Spirit. We are made partakers with Christ by a union in which we lean and depend upon Him. This union is further set forth by the vine and the branches; the branches are participators with the stem, the sap of the stem is for the branches; it

treasures it up only to distribute it to them; it has no sap for itself—all its store of sap is for the branch. In like manner we are vitally one with Christ, and the grace that is in Him is for us; it was given to Him that He might distribute it to all His people. Furthermore, it is as the union of the husband with the wife, they are participators the one with the other; all that belongs to the husband, the wife enjoys and shares with him; meanwhile she shares himself, no, he is all her own. Thus it is with Christ; we are married to Him; betrothed to Him forever in righteousness and in judgment, and all that He has is ours, and He, Himself, is ours; all His heart belongs to each one of us! And then, too, as the members of the body are one with the head; as they derive their guidance, their happiness, their existence from the head, so are we made partakers of Christ. Oh, matchless participation! “It is a great mystery” says the apostle, and, indeed, such a mystery it is as they only know who experience it! Even they cannot fully understand it; far less can they hope to set it forth so that carnal minds shall comprehend its spiritual meaning. The day comes when we shall be partakers of Christ to the highest and uttermost degree that symbols can suggest, prophecy foretell, faith anticipate, or actual accomplishment bring to pass, for, albeit, though of all that our Lord Jesus Christ is in heaven we have a reversionary interest today by faith, we shall have a share in it by actual *participation* before long!

Partakers of Christ! Yes, and therefore with Him partakers in destiny! When He shall come, His holy ones shall come with Him. That He has risen from the dead is the earnest of their resurrection; at the day of His appearing they shall rise and participate in the fruition of His mediatorial work. Then, in the judging of the world, in the destruction of all His spiritual foes, in the great marriage-day when the bride shall have made herself ready, and He shall drink of the new wine in the kingdom of His Father, and in all else that is to come—too glorious to be described except by symbols like those of the Apocalypse—His people shall participate with Him, for this honor have all His saints! All right and all might, all that can extol or delight, all that forever and forever shall contribute to the glory of Christ shall be shared by all the faithful, for we are partakers not only with Him, but *of* Him; *of Christ*—therefore of all the surroundings of glory and honor that shall belong to Him!

The language of the text reminds us that none of us have any title to this privilege by nature. “We are *made* partakers of Christ.” From our first parentage we derived a very different consequence; we all of woman born became partakers of the ruin of the first Adam; of the corruption of humanity; of the condemnation common to the entire race. Oh, to be *made* partakers! This is a work of divine grace, of Sovereign Omnipotent grace; a work which a man cannot sufficiently admire, and for which he can never be sufficiently grateful. “We are made partakers of Christ.” This is the Holy Spirit’s work in us, to rend us away from the old wild olive, and to graft us into the good olive; to dissolve the union between us and sin, and to cement a union between our souls and Christ; to take us out of the Egyptian bondage and the Egyptian night in which we willingly sat, and to bring us into the liberty and the Light of God wherewith Christ makes His people free and glad! This is work as grand and godlike as to create a world! Let the Lord’s name be magnified by each one of us, if, indeed, *we have* been made partakers of Christ. *If*—I say, and that, “if,” leads me to the second point I proposed to consider.

II. The privilege of which we have spoken suggests A SOLEMN SEARCHING QUESTION. Are we made partakers of Christ? O beloved, many think they are who are not! There is nothing more to be dreaded than a supposititious righteousness, a counterfeit justification, a spurious hope; better, I sometimes think, to have no religion than to have a false religion! I am quite certain that the man is much more likely to be saved who knows that he is naked, and poor, and miserable, than the man who says, “I am rich and increased in goods.” It is infinitely better to take the road to heaven *doubting*, than to go in another direction *presuming*! I am far better pleased with the soul that is always questioning, “Am I right?” than with him who has drunk the cup of arrogance till he is intoxicated with self-conceit and says, “I know my lot; the lines have fallen to me in pleasant places; there is no need for self-examination in my case.” Brothers and sisters, be assured of this: all men are not partakers of Christ; all baptized men are not partakers of Christ; all Churchmen are not partakers of Christ; all Dissenters are not made partakers of Christ; all members of *this Church* are not made partakers of Christ; all ministers, all elders, all bishops are not made partakers of Christ! Yes, all apostles were not made partakers of Christ; one of them, Christ’s familiar friend who kept the little purse which held all the Master’s earthly store, lifted up

his heel against Him, betrayed Him with a tender treacherous kiss, and became the son of perdition; Judas Iscariot was a *companion* of Christ, not a *partaker* of Him!

Am *I* made a partaker of Christ? Multiply the question till each individual among you makes it his own. In this congregation there are various classes; there are probably some here who are only hearers; hearers *about* Christ, not partakers *of* Christ. It is one thing to hear *about* a banquet; it is quite another thing to be fed at it; it is one thing in the wilderness to hear of rippling streams, and quite another to stoop down and drink the cooling draught; one thing for the prisoner by night to dream of liberty, or by day to read of roaming free through his native country; another thing to get rid of the chains; it is one thing to hear of pardon, another thing to be pardoned; it is one thing to hear of heaven, another thing to go there. O my dear hearers, some of you are as familiar with the gospel as you are with the house you live in, yet though you live in the house, you never live in the gospel, and I fear you never will! You hear it, and hear it, that is all. God grant you may not have to hear of your hearing in another world where it shall be laid down among the chief of your sins, that you were of those who, when they heard did provoke; provoke because they rejected what they ought to have received.

Others go farther than hearing; they become professors. May I remind you, and I would not judge anyone harshly; certainly no man more harshly than I would myself—it is one thing to *profess* to be a partaker of Christ, and another thing to be *made* a partaker of Christ. I may profess that I am rich, and be all the while a bankrupt, a dishonest bankrupt for having made the profession! I may protest that I am in health while a deadly cancer may lurk within; I may declare that I am honest, but it will not clear me before the judge if I am proved a thief. I may avow that I am loyal, but it would not save my life if I were convicted of high treason! Professions, ah, I fear they are, in many cases, but a painted pageantry that makes the road to hell attractive. There are Professions upon which we may gaze with a vacant wonder, and turn away with a cold shudder, as from the somber gaudiness of a funeral wherein prancing steeds, stately mutes, nodding plumes, and velvet palls adorn the funerals of the dead! God save us from a lifeless profession! May we never be like certain trees of which Bunyan said that they were green outside, but inwardly they were so rotten that they were only fit to be tinder for the devil's tinder-box! Many professors are too fair not to be false; they are too comely outside not to be loathsome inside, for there is an over-doing of the sepulcher's whitewash; you feel convinced that there would not be so much whitewashing outside if there were not a good deal of rottenness inside to be concealed! Essence of roses or of lavender is sweet, but much scent excites much suspicion; oh, let us each one who professes tonight, ask of himself, "I was baptized on a profession of my faith, but was I ever baptized *into* Christ? When the sacred name of the Triune God was named on me, did I then enter into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit? I have come often to the communion table, but have I communed with Christ there? My name is on the Church roll, but is it written in heaven? I have said to others I am a Christian, but am I in very deed known to Christ? Or will He say unto me in that day, 'I never knew you: depart from me you worker of iniquity'?"

These are solemn questions! Many persons are temporary followers of Christ, and outwardly, as far as the human eye can follow, they appear to be *real* followers of Christ. I believe in the Final Perseverance of the Saints, but I do not know, nor can any man know, how near a man may approach to the likeness of a saint and yet, after all, apostatize. Nor is any one of us able to say of himself, or of his fellow members, "We never shall fall away." I remember one whose voice I, and many of you heard in prayer, and we enjoyed the exercise of his gifts; the man had been reclaimed from the lowest class of society, and he distinguished himself by his devotion in such a way that he was accepted as a Church Officer among us. I remember when the first charge of sin was brought against him, and of very grievous sin, one among us said, "If that man is not a child of God, I am not a child of God." The expression seemed to me too strong, but in my heart I almost joined in it; I was ready to pronounce him innocent before I investigated the charges! I felt certain that there could not be in such a man as that the impurity laid at his door; but it was there, it was *all* there; and worse than tongue can tell. He repented, and though not received into the Church because the profession of repentance did not seem to be all we could wish it to be, yet there was a turning aside from sin for a while; but he went into it again, and he wallowed in it; he died in it; as far as we could, any of us judge, he perished in it. He went from bad to worse. I feel I might

say without uncharitableness, this man carried his iniquity as far as human judgment could track him. Therefore, without prejudice to the doctrine of the Final Perseverance of the Saints, which I implicitly believe, I will not venture to say of any among you; much less will I venture to say it of *myself*, that I am sure I am so made a partaker of Christ that I shall hold fast my confidence to the end! I hope so. I rest in Christ, trusting in Him, but the possibility is that I am deceiving myself; the possibility is that you may be self-deceivers. At any rate, it is so far a possibility that I would beseech you to have no confidence but such as the Holy Spirit gives you; put no reliance as to the future anywhere but in the eternal arms—have no assurance but that assurance which is based upon the Word of God, and the witness of the Spirit within your soul. That can give you infallible assurance! Apart from that, I repeat it again—I will say neither of you, nor of myself, that I can be sure with all the profession that is made, that we are partakers of Christ.

Some go even farther than being temporary followers of Christ, and yet, after all, perish; they maintain a consistent profession before the eyes of men throughout the whole of their lives; as vessels that navigate the whole of the sea, and go down in the harbor. There are soldiers that have held out and fought valiantly up to the very moment of victory, and then have run away; and there are professors who have been unexceptional in their lives; whose character has been apparently without a blemish, and even those who knew them in private could not detect any serious flaw in their conduct; yet, for all that, there was a worm at the root; there was a fly in the pot of ointment; a failure as to the sincerity of their grace. They had not, after all, the true faith which hangs upon Christ, and they did not persevere in *heart*, though they appeared to persevere in life. The difference between the Christian and the professor is sometimes such as only God can discern; there is a path which the eagle's eye has not seen, and the lion's whelp has not traversed; a path of life into which God can bring us, and of which it may be said that He knows all who are in it. But there is a something like it; a way which seems right unto a man, but the end thereof is the ways of death; there is a *counterfeit* of the true metal of grace so well manufactured that only Omniscience itself can tell which is reprobate silver, and which the pure shekel of the sanctuary is. We have grave reason then, for raising the question as to whether we are made partakers of Christ or not.

III. Now we come to THE UNERRING TEST. Patience comes to the aid of faith here. Evidences accumulate till the issue is conclusive. "We are made partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end."

This passage may be read in two ways, neither of which violates the literal meaning of the original; either of which may express to us the mind of the Spirit, as we have it in our version, "The beginning of our confidence," or, as I would rather translate it, "The *foundation* of our confidence," the basis on which our confidence rests. Take your choice. We will expound and vindicate both. That man is a partaker of Christ who holds fast what he had at first, having received it not as an education, but as an intuition of his spirit life; not as an argument, but as an axiom he could not challenge, or rather as an Oracle he received joyfully, and bowed to submissively. The confidence which is based upon the true foundation, even Christ Jesus, is simple and clear as one's own consciousness. It asks no proof because it admits no doubt. In vain the skeptic comes to me, and says, "Sir, you are asleep and dreaming." I answer, "No, Sir, I am speaking to these thousands, and they are listening to me." Even so, when I first believed the gospel story, it was with a childlike feeling that it was so and I knew it. The man who is not a partaker of Christ hears the gospel, professes to believe it, and in some measure acts accordingly; but he perishes because this pure, unwavering faith does not abide in him; he has not the faith of God's elect which never can be destroyed; he has only a *notion*, a creed of his own making, and not a faith of the Spirit's giving.

Now, beloved, what was the beginning of our confidence? Well, the beginning of *my* confidence was, "I am a sinner; Christ is a Savior; and I rest on Him to save me." Long before I began with Christ, He had begun with me! But when I began with Him it was, as the law writers say, "*In forma pauperis*," after the style of a wretched mendicant; a pauper who had nothing of his own, and looked to Christ for everything. I know when I first cast my eyes to His dear cross and rested in Him, I had not any merit of my own—it was all demerit; I was not deserving, except that I felt I was hell-deserving! I had not even a

shade of virtue that I could confide in; it was all over with me; I had come to an extremity; I could not have found a farthing's worth of goodness in myself if I had been melted down. I seemed to be all rottenness—a dunghill of corruption, nothing better, but something a great deal worse! I could truly join with Paul, at that time, and say that my own righteousnesses were dung. A strong expression he used, but I do not suppose he felt it to be strong enough; he says, "I count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in Him." Well, that is how we all began with Christ! We were nothing at all, and Jesus Christ was All in All! Now, brothers and sisters, we are not made partakers of Christ unless we hold this fast to the end. Have you got beyond that? Are you something *creditable* in your own estimation? I am afraid for you! Are you richer now in yourselves that you were then? I am afraid for you, brothers and sisters! Do you remember the place you used to stand in; you dared not lift your eyes to heaven, but cried, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Now in *Christ* you have a far nobler place than that, for you are made to sit with Him in the heavenly places. But, I ask you; apart from Christ have you any different place from that of deep self-abasement? If you have, you have not held the beginning of your confidence fast even until now; begin to suspect yourself! This is the position always to take—"Having nothing, and yet possessing all things."—

*"I the chief of sinners am
But Jesus died for me."*

Such is the beginning of our confidence. Brothers and sisters, where else was the beginning of your confidence? May we not say of it that it was only and wholly, entirely and exclusively, in the blood and righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ? In the beginning of your confidence you did not rely upon any ceremonies, nor upon priests, nor upon your Bible readings, nor upon your prayers, nor upon your feelings, nor your experiences, nor your orthodoxy, nor your knowledge of doctrine, nor upon your works, nor your preaching, your sanctifications, or your mortifications; no, in the beginning of your confidence the *one* foundation was *Jesus only*! Nothing save Jesus would I know! Oh, if on that day, I had met with a man who had any trust in his own righteousness, I know I would have quarreled with him! If he had told me that he hoped that Jesus Christ would help him to save *himself*, I could have wept over him to think he should be such a fool! Why, Christ is all or nothing! He must save us from top to bottom, or we never shall be saved at all! If our foundation is partly on the rock of His finished work, and partly on the sand of our own unworthy doing; the whole house totters and it must come down!

Well, brothers and sisters, is there any correspondence between the beginning of your confidence and your present situation? Had you anything except Christ to depend upon in the hour you first believed? Is there anything now added to that one Foundation that God has laid, or has your trust been supplemented by any fresh conceit of your own? Are you faithless? God is faithful. With you, it may be yes and no; with Him it is yes and amen! Some of the Israelites, when they came out of Egypt, depended upon God; they saw that He had divided the Red Sea, and rained down the manna, and refreshed them with streams in the desert, and so they believed—but their faith did not hold out. While they could see miracles of mercy, they relied on God with nothing else to rely on; but when they got into a little difficulty they did not hold fast the beginning of their confidence unto the end, for they began to lose faith in Moses, or to confide in a golden calf. So there are some who begin, in a time of weakness, calamity, or despondence, by saying, "I a sinner trust in Christ." They get beyond that when they recover from their temporary depression; then they qualify their confessions after their altered circumstances, and elect their religion after their own deliberate choice. But the God of Israel will not allow it; He will not have us put any trust but in His dear Son! We must be stripped naked of everything but that which Christ spins. We must have all our bread moldy until we cast it out because we loathe it, and we must feed on nothing but the Bread of heaven. If we get beyond that and feed on anything else, we are not made partakers of Him, for we have not held fast the beginning of our confidence!

Let me call back your thoughts again, beloved, to the love of your espousals, when you acknowledged the Lord and went after Him in the wilderness. Did you not, then, have confidence in Christ of a very humble character? Oh, at that time you did not need to be among the first of God's people to play the part of Diotrephes! When you were at the foot of the cross and looked up as a poor sinner, you had no notion about being a distinguished man in the Church. I know it did not enter into my head that day,

that I should be a leader in God's Israel; ah no, if I might but sit in the corner of His House, or be a door keeper, it had been enough for me! If, like the dog under the table, I might get a crumb of His Mercy, were it but flavored by His hand, because *He* had broken it off, that is all I needed! That is just how we ought *always* to live—lowly, humbly, gentle, broken-spirited, and ready to be anything so that Christ may be glorified. It shows the risings of the *old nature* when we get to be such consequential people that if anybody should say a hard word, we wonder; or if anybody slanders us, instead of saying, "Ah, if he knew us, he could say something a good deal worse"—we are in a high and mighty temper because our brilliant character is injured!

Verily, I think that when I was first converted to God, if the Lord had said, "I have taken you into My House, and I am going to make use of you, and you shall be a door-mat for the saints to wipe their feet on," I would have said, "Ah, happy shall I be if I but take the filth off their blessed feet, for I love God's people; and if I may minister to them in the slightest degree, it shall be my delight." But when we get away from that position we are in danger; if we are made partakers of Christ, the proof will be in our continuing to be of a meek and lowly spirit—willing to serve Him in any capacity—in our becoming like little children, for, "Except we become as little children, we shall in no wise enter the kingdom of heaven." Little children we were in the beginning of our confidence; little children we must continue to be, or else we may gravely question whether we have been made partakers of Christ.

When we were first made partakers of Christ, we received Him very gratefully. How thankful we were for one look from Jesus' eyes! Half a promise seemed precious in those days. The sermon, though it was perhaps uncouth, if full of Christ, fed us to the fullest! Now, alas, how many professors despise precious truth of God if it does not happen to be clothed in the most polished phrases? They run here and there where there is no food for them; not hungering and thirsting after righteousness as before; they admire the banquet spread out with all flowers and no fruit; they look after gaudy periods where pure silver and polished sham sparkle, though there is no food for the soul to feed on. If they held fast the beginning of their confidence, they would prize the truth, and *love* the truth, and account that if it were but the truth of God it did not matter in what shape it came to them, so long as they could get hold of a promise, have a smile from Christ's face, or enjoy one ray of the blessed Spirit's consolation in their souls. But now the starving beggars have become dainty epicures; those who once were glad enough to come and feast on broken crusts from the Master's table have now become connoisseurs of their Master's food; their soul "loathes this light bread," though it is the bread of angels, and drops from the granaries of God! We should suspect ourselves when we get into that squeamish condition! Such a proud captious state of heart does not show evidence that we have been made partakers of Christ at all!

When we first received our confidence, we were obedient in word and deed. I wish all disciples of Christ had the like scrupulous conscience. I speak of my own experience. The first week after I was converted to God, I felt afraid to put one foot before another for fear I would do wrong; when I thought over the day, if there had been a failure in my temper, or if there had been a frothy work spoken, or something done amiss, I did chasten myself sorely, and had I known at that time anything to be my Lord's will, I think I should not have hesitated to do it; to me it would not have mattered whether it was a fashionable thing or an unfashionable thing if it were according to His Word. Oh, to do His will! To follow Him where ever He would have me go! Why, then it seemed as though I would never, never, never be slack in keeping His commandments! Dear brothers and sisters, have you held fast the beginning of your confidence? I strike upon my own breast when I remember that in that respect, I have not held fast the beginning of my confidence! To the cross again! Beloved, if any of you have doubts awakened in your mind by such bitter reflections upon yourselves, do not dispute with your doubts—go to the cross again! Never dispute with the devil; he can always beat you! Go straight to the cross! If he says, "You are no saint," say, then, "Very likely I am not, but there is one thing even *you* cannot deny; you cannot say I am *not a sinner*; a sinner I am! Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, and if I never trusted Him before, I will begin now; if I never yet did know the life of God, I will look to His death now! Oh, if I never was healed of the disease of sin, there is healing in those dear wounds, and I, by faith, will have it while yet it is called today." Jesus, I trust You! I trust You wholly, and You alone!

I have heard that some years ago there was a coal-pit in work, the shaft of which by some means got blocked up, and the men could not get out of it. They were very nearly perishing. One of them had heard that there was an old working which led to another mine, and though he was afraid it might be blocked up, yet the best thing they could do would be to go along, if perhaps they might come to the mouth of another shaft. This old working had not been traversed for some time, and it was never very high; they had to go along on their hands and knees, and generally needed to crawl lying flat on the ground. At length they came to the mouth of that old shaft—and they gladly found their way to the upper air again! Perhaps some of you have been living, up to now, by frames and feelings; that experience has been the shaft by which you have been coming and going; and this shaft has been blocked up tonight. Well, I am not sorry for it. Come, now, brothers and sisters, let us all go along on our hands and knees where the sinners go! Let us crawl to the old shaft! Let us prostrate ourselves, confessing, “Lord, I am vile, conceived in sin; Lord, I am unworthy; Lord, I am earthly, selfish, devilish; Lord, I am a mass of wounds, and a mass of loathsomeness; I am unworthy of Your favor and Your love.” Let us just creep along in that fashion till we come to Christ, and say—

*“Just as I am, without one plea,
Save that Your blood was shed for me,
And that you bid me come to Thee.
O Lamb of God, I come!”*

You will find that old shaft is not shut up; there is light. Look up! There is the cross above you! Jesus is still willing to receive sinners, still able to save sinners, for He is “exalted” on high, “to give repentance unto Israel and remission of sins.” O come to Him just that way! And, brothers and sisters, when you get back to Christ in that way by which you went years ago, the advice of the text, with which I will sum up, is keep on coming to Him in that same way always! Keep on coming always! Keep on coming always! Perhaps you have been on the top of a mountain such as the Rigi or as Snowden; you know these mountains do not move; they are good solid rock under your feet. But people erect platforms on the top of them to see the sun rise a little sooner, or something of that sort, and from the top of one of those platforms a man may come down with a crash, and break his limbs! That is something like our platforms which we put up over our simple faith in Christ; our beautiful feelings and experiences—they will come down with a crash someday, for they are rotten stuff! But, when a man stands upon this—“Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, and I am resting upon Him; He is all my salvation, and all my desire; His precious blood is all my confidence; the love of His heart, the power of His arm, the merit of His plea—here I rest myself.” O beloved, there is no fear of *that* confidence ever giving way beneath your feet! There may you stand and serenely rejoice when worlds shall melt, and the pillars of the earth shall reel! God bless you, and keep you always holding the beginning of your confidence steadfast unto the end. So shall it be proved beyond question that you are partakers of Christ. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON— HEBREWS 3.

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